

# **Educating Your Community**

About

# **Glaucoma**



Tips and Tools for  
Making Vision a Health Priority



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health  
National Eye Institute



# **Educating Your Community About Glaucoma**

## **Tips and Tools for Making Vision a Health Priority**

This handbook is for people who want to help promote eye health education in their communities. It contains:

- Facts about glaucoma
- Activity suggestions
- Promotional materials
- Reproducible brochure.

This handbook is part of the Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit. See the inside back cover for more information.

This handbook is from the National Eye Institute (NEI), the lead agency for Healthy Vision 2010. The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information about the NEI, contact:

National Eye Institute  
National Institutes of Health  
2020 Vision Place  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3655  
Telephone: 301-496-5248  
E-mail: [2020@nei.nih.gov](mailto:2020@nei.nih.gov)  
Website: [www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov)

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A stylized graphic of an eye, composed of concentric blue arcs, positioned at the top left of the page.

# Welcome to Healthy Vision 2010

Glaucoma is an eye disease that has no warning signs. It causes vision loss when left untreated. The only way to detect glaucoma before any vision is lost is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years if you are at higher risk for the disease.

An estimated 2.2 million people in the United States have glaucoma; of these, as many as 120,000 are blind as a result. Furthermore, glaucoma is the number one cause of vision loss in African Americans. Treatments to slow the progression of the disease are available. However, at least half of the people with glaucoma are not receiving treatment because they are unaware of their condition.

Reducing visual impairment due to glaucoma is an objective of Healthy Vision 2010. Healthy Vision 2010 is one component of Healthy People 2010, a comprehensive framework for improving the health of our Nation, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

You can play an important role in helping to reduce visual impairment from glaucoma by sharing the messages and materials in this Handbook through your agency or organization with people who are at risk for glaucoma or their families, friends, and caregivers.

Some suggestions for using the materials in this Handbook include:

- ❖ Cut out, copy, and distribute the brochure, newsletter article, and print public service announcements (PSAs).
- ❖ Include the newsletter article and PSAs in your publications, or on your Intranet or Website.

- ❖ Record the radio PSAs and play them on your audio system, on-hold line, or local radio station.
- ❖ Read the suggestions in the “Help Reduce Visual Impairment...” section to see other ways your organization or business can become part of a community-wide effort to reduce vision loss due to glaucoma.

Learn how others are helping. Get the most current information and materials and report your activities at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org). This Website is updated regularly.

Thank you for giving your time and talents to the important effort of helping to reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma. Best wishes for your success.

# Help Reduce Visual Impairment Due to Glaucoma

Left untreated, glaucoma causes progressive optic nerve damage that leads to vision loss. An estimated 2.2 million people in the United States have glaucoma; of these, as many as 120,000 are blind as a result. Open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of glaucoma. Immediate treatment for early-stage, open-angle glaucoma can delay the progression of the disease. Generally, vision that is lost cannot be restored, which is why early diagnosis is so important.

Use the ideas in this section, along with the other materials in this Handbook, to help increase awareness about visual impairment from glaucoma. These messages and materials will help people who are at risk for glaucoma understand that a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years is the best way for them to detect the disease early. Use the suggestions individually or as part of a community-wide glaucoma program. Whatever you do will help.



To learn what local chapters of national ophthalmological, optometric, professional, or voluntary organizations are already doing to develop community-wide activities and programs in your area, and to get the latest information about glaucoma, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org).

Answering these questions will help you plan and carry out activities that will encourage people at higher risk for glaucoma to get comprehensive dilated eye exams at least once every 2 years.

### **Who can benefit from information about glaucoma?**

Groups at higher risk for glaucoma:

- ❖ African Americans over age 40
- ❖ Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans
- ❖ People with a family history of glaucoma
- ❖ Families, friends, coworkers, and caregivers of people who are at risk for glaucoma.

### **What does your audience need to know?**

Glaucoma is an eye disease that has no warning signs. It causes vision loss when left untreated. The only way to detect glaucoma before any vision is lost is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years if you are at higher risk for the disease.

### **Are comprehensive dilated eye exams expensive?**

Medicare helps to pay for a comprehensive dilated eye exam every year if you are an African American over age 50, if you have a family history of glaucoma, or if you have diabetes. Contact 1-800-MEDICARE for more information.

### **Community health and eye care professionals can take the lead.**

- ❖ Provide vision education materials, including the brochure in this Handbook, to patients and their families. Additional glaucoma education materials are available at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org).

- ❖ Arrange for eye care professionals and other health professionals to speak about the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams and the Medicare benefit that covers these exams at civic, employee, cultural, faith, and fraternal events.
- ❖ Distribute the brochure in this Handbook at health clinics, health fairs, and other health-promotion events.
- ❖ Include the newsletter or newspaper article in this Handbook in your health maintenance organization (HMO), insurance provider, or eye health patient and consumer publications, or post it on your Intranet or Website.
- ❖ Display posters and brochures anywhere people at higher risk for glaucoma will view them.
- ❖ Develop in-service training seminars at medical, health, and social service agencies. Ask hospitals to include information about glaucoma in medical continuing education programs. Be sure to include information about the Medicare benefit that covers comprehensive dilated eye exams for people at higher risk for glaucoma.
- ❖ Record the radio PSAs in this Handbook and play them for callers who are put on hold at health clinics, insurance companies, or hospitals.
- ❖ Display brochures and place inserts in prescription bags.
- ❖ Print the PSAs in this Handbook on store receipts. Additional messages may be found throughout this Handbook and in the radio PSAs on page 17.



### **Faith communities can get families involved.**

- ❖ Include the PSAs and the newsletter article in the publications of your faith group.
- ❖ After faith services or social events, display information about the importance of getting comprehensive dilated eye exams for early detection of glaucoma.
- ❖ Host events that can help raise awareness, such as a walking tour, mini-golf tournament, car wash, bicycle ride, or chess tournament.
- ❖ Arrange for faith-community volunteers to remind people who are at risk of glaucoma when they are due for a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Encourage them to provide transportation for visits to eye care professionals for these exams.

### **Community leaders can raise awareness.**

- ❖ Issue a proclamation about the importance of helping people at risk for glaucoma understand the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams to detect the disease before vision is lost. Proclaim “Glaucoma Outreach (Day, Week, or Month).”
- ❖ Be a spokesperson. Local community leaders, celebrities, performers, or elected officials can help raise awareness by speaking about visual impairment from glaucoma at council meetings, professional and civic gatherings, and community events.
- ❖ Include statements about the impact of glaucoma in your community in press materials and speeches about health issues that concern older Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and African Americans.

- ❖ Participate in events and activities intended to raise awareness about glaucoma, such as a read-a-thon using visual devices and large-print materials.

### **Special events can reach new people.**

- ❖ Schedule events during health observances, especially during Healthy Vision Month in May, which was established by the National Eye Institute (NEI) in 2003.
- ❖ Take advantage of community events such as local health fairs, parades, festivals, sports events, and walk-for-health events. Focus on special events and festivals that attract people at higher risk for glaucoma, especially older Americans.
- ❖ Keep a list of people who visit exhibits or booths. Send reminder cards for them to make an appointment for a comprehensive dilated eye exam for themselves or a loved one.

### **Employers can support employees and families.**

- ❖ Establish a glaucoma information center in your employee cafeteria, personnel office, or health center using the brochure in this Handbook, and other glaucoma materials available at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org).
- ❖ Offer incentives for employees who are at higher risk for glaucoma to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years. An incentive could be time off at company expense to get the exams from a nearby eye care professional, or for the company to offset the portion of the cost not paid by insurance or Medicare.

- ❖ Distribute the glaucoma brochure in this Handbook at annual employee health seminars and include this information at preretirement planning workshops.
- ❖ Include an eye exam benefit in your health insurance program for employees who are at higher risk for glaucoma and who are not covered by the Medicare benefit.
- ❖ Distribute the glaucoma brochure in this Handbook with employee paychecks so they can pass it along to family members or friends who are at risk.
- ❖ Use the artwork in this Handbook on paycheck inserts, posters, and brochures.
- ❖ Include the newsletter article in this Handbook in your company newsletter.

### **Businesses can support community-wide efforts.**

- ❖ If your business has printing capabilities, offer to print materials in this Handbook or ones that you develop for your program. Include the name of your business on the materials.
- ❖ Include the glaucoma PSAs in community coupon mailers, shopping circulars, and your community phone book.
- ❖ Put the glaucoma message in this section into people's hands through inserts in utility bills and bank statements.
- ❖ Print the glaucoma message in this Handbook on restaurant receipts, placemats, take-out food containers, and cups.
- ❖ Record the radio PSAs in this Handbook and play them on your public audio systems.

- ❖ Place the newsletter article in this Handbook in your company or customer newsletter.
- ❖ Sponsor a health fair, make room for an exhibit, or provide space for a table or booth to distribute the brochures in this Handbook and other information about glaucoma. Information about glaucoma is available at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org).

By taking the steps to promote comprehensive dilated eye exams at least once every 2 years for people at higher risk for glaucoma, you are joining thousands of other businesses, employers, health centers, medical professionals, and citizens across the country in the effort to reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma.

# Share in the Success of Healthy Vision 2010

Others can learn from the activities you develop. Report your activities to your local community organizer, and visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org) to share your efforts and successes. Also use the Website to learn what others are doing to help reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma. Thank you for your efforts.

## Some Simple Steps

- ❖ Keep track of the following:
  - Number and type of materials distributed.
  - Number of people reached.
  - Number and type of inquiries received about comprehensive dilated eye exams for early detection of glaucoma.
  - Increase in the number of comprehensive dilated eye exams among people at higher risk in your community.
  - Media coverage: Where the newsletter or stories about your event appeared.
- ❖ After the activity or event, answer the following questions:
  - What worked?
  - What challenges did you encounter?
  - What suggestions would you give others who might plan a similar activity or event?



# Facts About Glaucoma

Glaucoma has no warning signs. It causes vision loss when left untreated. The only way to detect glaucoma before any vision is lost is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years if you are at higher risk for the disease.

## What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the optic nerve of the eye and can result in vision loss. Open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of glaucoma.

## Who needs to know about glaucoma?

Anyone can develop glaucoma. People at higher risk for glaucoma should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years. These people include:

- ❖ African Americans over age 40
- ❖ Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans
- ❖ People with a family history of glaucoma.

Other people who need to know about glaucoma include the family members, friends, coworkers, and caretakers of people who are at higher risk for glaucoma.

## What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

At first, open-angle glaucoma has no symptoms. It causes no pain, and vision remains normal. As glaucoma remains untreated, people may notice they miss objects to the side and out of the corners of their eyes.

Without treatment, people with glaucoma will slowly lose their peripheral (side) vision. They seem to be looking through a tunnel. Over time, straight-ahead vision may decrease until no vision remains.

Glaucoma can develop in one or both eyes.

### How is glaucoma detected?

Glaucoma is detected through a comprehensive dilated eye exam that includes the following:

- ❖ Visual acuity test: This eye chart test measures how well you see at various distances.
- ❖ Visual field test: This test measures your peripheral vision. It helps your eye care professional tell whether you have lost peripheral vision, a sign of glaucoma.
- ❖ Comprehensive dilated eye exam: Drops are placed in your eyes to widen, or dilate, the pupils. Your eye care professional uses a special magnifying lens to examine your retina and optic nerve for signs of damage and other eye problems. After the exam, your close-up vision may remain blurred for several hours.
- ❖ Tonometry: An instrument that measures the pressure inside the eye. Numbing drops may be applied to your eye for this test.
- ❖ Pachymetry: A numbing drop is applied to your eye. Your eye care professional uses an ultrasonic wave instrument to measure the thickness of your cornea.

### **Can glaucoma be cured?**

No. There is no cure for glaucoma. Vision lost from the disease cannot be restored.

### **How is glaucoma treated?**

- ❖ Medication: Medicine may be given to decrease production of fluid in the eye, or to increase drainage.
- ❖ Laser Procedures: Laser treatment can help fluid drain more efficiently.
- ❖ Surgery: A procedure called a trabeculectomy opens a new pathway for the fluid to drain.

### **Does increased eye pressure mean that I have glaucoma?**

Not necessarily. Increased eye pressure means you are at risk for glaucoma, but it does not mean you have the disease. A person has glaucoma only if the optic nerve is damaged. If you have increased eye pressure but no damage to the optic nerve, you do not have glaucoma. However, you are at risk, which is why a comprehensive dilated eye exam is important. Follow the advice of your eye care professional.

### **What can I do to protect my vision?**

Everyone should have regular eye exams. Getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years is the key to saving your vision from glaucoma if you are at higher risk for the disease.

### **Are comprehensive dilated eye exams expensive?**

Medicare helps pay for a comprehensive dilated eye exam every year if you are an African American over age 50, if you have a family history of glaucoma, or if you have diabetes. Contact 1-800-MEDICARE for more information.





*Here is an article you can put in your company or organizational newsletter or post on your company bulletin board or Intranet.*

## **Glaucoma Has No Warning Signs**

Glaucoma is an eye disease that has no warning signs. It causes vision loss when left untreated. The only way to detect glaucoma before any vision is lost is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years if you are at higher risk for the disease. People at higher risk for glaucoma include African Americans over age 40; everyone over age 60, but especially Mexican Americans; and people with a family history of glaucoma.

An estimated 2.2 million people in the United States have glaucoma; of these, as many as 120,000 are blind as a result. Furthermore, glaucoma is the number one cause of vision loss in African Americans. Treatments to slow the progression of the disease are available. However, at least half of the people who have glaucoma are not receiving treatment because they are unaware of their condition.

Through a comprehensive dilated eye exam, your eye care professional can detect early signs of glaucoma before vision is lost. This exam allows the eye care professional to get a better look at the retina (light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye) and optic nerve for signs of damage and other eye problems.

Open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of glaucoma. At first, open-angle glaucoma has no symptoms. It causes no pain, and vision remains normal. Immediate treatment for early stage, open-angle glaucoma can delay progression of the disease, which is why early diagnosis is important.

Glaucoma treatments include medicines, a laser operation that helps drain fluid out of the eye (trabeculoplasty), conventional surgery, or a combination of any of these. While these treatments may save remaining vision, they do not improve sight already lost from glaucoma.

Everyone should have regular eye exams. Getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years is the key to saving your vision from glaucoma if you are at higher risk for the disease.

For more information about glaucoma, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org), sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Healthy Vision Consortium.

The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



# Radio Public Service Announcements

## **Glaucoma Radio PSA:**

### **15-second spot**

#### **“Don’t Lose Sight of Glaucoma”**

Station announcer:

If you’re over 60, or African American and over 40, vision loss from glaucoma is a real possibility.

Get an eye exam through dilated pupils, now.

Don’t lose sight of glaucoma.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

### **30-second spot**

#### **“Glaucoma Can Be Controlled”**

Station announcer:

You could be losing your vision and not even know it.

That’s what glaucoma does. It sneaks up on you, gradually.

Especially if you're over 60, or African American and over 40.

Glaucoma can’t be cured, but it can be controlled and the risk of vision loss reduced if glaucoma is detected early.

That's why it's so important to get a comprehensive dilated eye examination. It doesn't hurt, it's easy, and it could save your sight.

Get your eyes examined.

Don't lose sight of glaucoma.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

### **60-second spot**

#### **“Are You at Risk for Glaucoma?”**

Station announcer:

Did you know you could be losing your vision and not even know it? That's what glaucoma does. It sneaks up on you, gradually.

It's a leading cause of vision loss in all adults over age 60. If you are African American and over age 40, or if you have a family history of glaucoma, you also are at higher risk.

Glaucoma can't be cured, but it can be controlled and the risk of vision loss reduced if the disease is detected and treated in time.

That's why it's so important for people at increased risk, especially those who are African American and over age 40, to have a comprehensive dilated eye examination at least once every 2 years.

It doesn't hurt, it's easy, and it could save your sight. So make an appointment, now. Get your eyes examined.

Don't lose sight of glaucoma.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].



# Print Public Service Announcements

ARE YOU  
OVER  
SIXTY?

AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
AND OVER  
FORTY?



KEEP AN  
EYE ON  
GLAUCOMA.

The only way to detect glaucoma is through a dilated eye exam. That's why it's so important to see your eye care professional every 2 years for a dilated eye exam. Don't take a chance with glaucoma.



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
National Institutes of Health  
National Eye Institute



If you're over 60, or African American and over 40, you are at high risk for glaucoma. And the only way to detect glaucoma is through a dilated eye exam. That's why it's so important to see your eye care professional every 2 years for a dilated eye exam. Don't take a chance with glaucoma. If you're at risk, get a dilated eye exam every 2 years.

Write: Glaucoma,  
2020 Vision Place  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3655



**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
National Institutes of Health  
National Eye Institute

Add your logo and copy this brochure to hand out at your events, or add an address on the back and mail it out.



For more information about glaucoma,  
visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at  
[www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org).

# Glaucoma Has No Warning Signs

## What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is an eye disease that has no warning signs. It causes vision loss when left untreated.



The only way to detect glaucoma before any vision is lost is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years if you are at higher risk for the disease.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health  
National Eye Institute



If you are at higher risk for glaucoma, you should have this exam at least once every 2 years to find out if you have early signs of the disease. People at higher risk include African Americans over age 40; everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans; and those with a family history of glaucoma.

**Why do people at higher risk for glaucoma need a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years?**

The early stages of glaucoma have no warning signs. Open-angle glaucoma is the most common form. At first, open-angle glaucoma has no symptoms. It causes no pain, and vision remains normal. In a comprehensive dilated eye exam, your eye care professional can get a better look at the optic nerve to check for early signs of glaucoma before any vision is lost.

**Can glaucoma be cured?**

No. There is no cure for glaucoma. Vision lost from the disease cannot be restored.

**Can glaucoma be treated?**

Yes. Immediate treatment for early stage, open-angle glaucoma can delay progression of the disease. That's why early diagnosis is important. However, vision already lost cannot be restored. Glaucoma is treated with medication, laser surgery, and conventional surgery.

**How can you protect your vision?**

The best protection for people at higher risk for glaucoma is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once every 2 years.



# Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit

The Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit is an interactive CD-ROM that includes Handbooks, the Community Action Guide, and the Speaker's Guide. These resources also are available on the Web at [www.healthyvision2010.org/](http://www.healthyvision2010.org/), and are targeted to those who want to make vision a health priority in their communities.

- **The handbooks** each focus on a different Healthy Vision 2010 objective. They include community-based activity suggestions, newspaper/newsletter articles, public service announcements, and brochures to copy and to hand out.
- **The Community Action Guide** includes a planning timeline, media materials, tips for involving your community, and more.
- **The Speaker's Guide** contains presentations to engage and inform communities about eye health. PowerPoint, Word, and Acrobat versions of each presentation, along with speaker's notes, are included. Topics include injury and safety, eye disease, vision rehabilitation, and others.

## Healthy Vision 2010 Objectives

Healthy People 2010, the prevention framework of the Nation, challenges individuals, communities, and professionals to take specific steps to ensure that good health and long life are enjoyed by all. Healthy Vision 2010 refers to the vision objectives in Focus Area 28 of Healthy People 2010.

Following are the 10 vision objectives:

- 28-1 Increase the proportion of persons who have a dilated eye examination at appropriate intervals.
- 28-2 Increase the proportion of preschool children aged 5 years and under who receive vision screening.
- 28-3 Reduce uncorrected visual impairment due to refractive errors.
- 28-4 Reduce blindness and visual impairment in children and adolescents aged 17 years and under.
- 28-5 Reduce visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy.
- 28-6 Reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma.
- 28-7 Reduce visual impairment due to cataract.
- 28-8 Reduce occupational eye injury.
- 28-9 Increase the use of appropriate personal protective eyewear in recreational activities and hazardous situations around the home.
- 28-10 Increase vision rehabilitation.
  - 28-10a Increase the use of rehabilitation services by persons with visual impairments.
  - 28-10b Increase the use of visual and adaptive devices by persons with visual impairments.

For copies and information, please visit [www.healthyvision2010.org](http://www.healthyvision2010.org).

